

"Piece By Piece -- Bethsaida!"

Text: Mark 8:24, "And he looked up, and said, 'I see men like trees, walking.'"

Scripture: Mark 8:22-26,, Matthew 11:20-24.

from Mark

In our Scripture this morning we read of Jesus coming once again to Bethsaida.

The name Bethsaida meant "House of Fishers". A goodly portion of it was made up of fishermen. Herod Philip or Philip the Tetrarch rebuilt Bethsaida around 2 BC, and he renamed it Bethsaida - Julias in honor of Julia the daughter of Augustus Caesar. At another point in His ministry, Jesus had been here and we find this recorded in the 11th chapter of Matthew. It is in this chapter that Jesus speaks very highly of John the Baptist and his ministry among these people. He takes ~~them~~ ^{the people} to task and upbraids them for their unbelief. He passes judgement upon the towns in this area and among them is found the name of Bethsaida. Jesus speaks more highly of Tyre and Sidon than He does of Bethsaida. This would rankle any who heard it, for Bethsaida, Chorazin and Capernaum were Jewish areas of population and Tyre and Sidon were made up of Gentiles.

Jesus condemnation of Bethsaida ~~xxxxxx~~ ^{along with the other cities} according to the Gospel of Matthew is due to the fact that John and his works were rejected there, and so was the efforts of Jesus. We are told from the Matthew Scripture that Jesus did most of His mighty works there, but they repented not. At this point we must interject that ~~xx~~ again we do not have a great deal of background on just what He did there and ~~xxxx~~ how many miracles He performed, but we can deduce from what Matthew says, that He did some wonderful things in this area.

But here again indifference must have reared its ugly head. Indifference to the fact that not only one great preacher, but two had come upon the scene in these towns. And still the people were not moved neither by the strong preaching of one, and the healing as well as the preaching of the other. The portion of Bethsaida that was not made up of fishermen, was made up of prosperous business people and people who were unmoved in any way by religion, except their own brand of religion, indifference to all except their needs.

This then sets the stage for the healing of the blind man who ~~xxxx~~ was brought ^{was brought} to Jesus when he came into Bethsaida. And so we read in the 23rd verse of the 8th chapter of Mark, ~~xxxx~~ that, "He took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town." This shows that Jesus was not going to perform any more miracles there. ~~xx~~ This is rather significant when we also realize that the town of Bethsaida supplied one quarter of the disciples of Jesus. Philip, Andrew, and Peter were all from Bethsaida, and yet for all intents and purposes, Jesus ministry had failed there. So Jesus is unwilling to perform a ministry in Bethsaida, but He is not unwilling to help an individual who needs help.

Once again we read of the use of saliva for a part of the healing process. We mentioned this last week, but it has some merits when we stop to think that when we receive a burn or a cut on our hands we almost automatically put the hand or finger to our mouth. Blindness was a common and prevalent thing in the middle East. Many people suffered from Ophthalmia which is a severe inflammation of the eyeball, and because of their ignorance of hygiene and cleanliness, many of them aggravated the condition and it led to blindness.

But we see in this incident the desire of Jesus to show love and compassion on someone who was in need of it. But we also see in this incident something that is found in no other. It was not a miraculous one step healing, but instead it took two attempts to completely ~~fix~~ restore the man's sight. There are those who would tell us that Jesus did not do something just right the first time and so the complete cure was not enacted. But I believe that this was a deliberate act on the part of Jesus. After all, He had the power to still the waves. He had the power to heal someone who was miles away from Him, and someone that He never even saw face to face. With power such as this, why would He require two attempts to heal this man? The answer lies in the fact that here was a man who was completely blind. He did not have a partial eye illness that required a special approach as some would have us think. He was completely blind, and could see nothing. Jesus

touches his eyes and we are told, "He looked up, and said, 'I see men like
ees, walking.'" His sight was not complete all at once. W₂ then read that
Jesus touched his eyes again, and then he swa everything clearly.

I believe the significance of this is that this was an object lesson for
His followers then, and it should be an object lesson for us today. When
Jesus touched the man he did not see everything completely and all at once.
This story suggests the p tiful condition of a man looking for a complete
cure and here ~~ix~~ he is only half-cured. It suggests to us the pitiful con-
dition of people in all walks of life who have never permitted Jesus to
to perform the service of complete renewal in them. There are so many who
only have or possess a dim or clouded view of Him. They only know a portion
of Him. They can rattle off, "Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified
dead and buried; the third day He rose again from the dead," but the real
meaning and significance of this is lost to them. What a pity, when the
complete cure is to just accept Him completely and simply. To merely let
go, and let God. They do not see Him as the one who reveals the Father
or as the one through whom the Father is seen. They do not see Him as the
Saviour who can transform their lives simply by accepting Him in faith as
a little child trusts its earthly parents.

One of the dangers of Evangelism and striving to speak to someone about
accepting Christ, is the danger of making it appear that this is all there
is to it. One of the dangers of church membership is that many feel that
is all there is to it. But in evangelism and church membership it is an
ongoing process. It must be a continual converting and re-converting in
a person's life. It should be a renewal in some area of life almost daily.
Perhaps it is the fault of the clergy, and I would suspect that this is
partially the problem at least. But a man named Roger Tennant has summed
it up quite well in something he wrote. He says, (Illustration of Greatest
Achievement).

This I believe is the state we find ourselves in today. In ~~xxxxx~~ many of our
churches we only have a partial vision. We see Christianity like trees,

instead of seeing it as joyous and beautiful. I do not know whether I am able to ever convey to you the joy that ~~in~~ is involved in striving to live for Christ. I keep praying that God will let me convey this to you whenever I preach or conduct worship. For it is joyful and joyous. It is not a dead thing that is dull and lusterless. But it is something that is rich and full. To be a Christian is to be a joyous person and to show forth this joy in all circumstances of life.

But we must also remember that this is a step by step process. We do not know, nor understand what it is all about in just one day or one week. It must be a steady growing in Christ on a day by day, moment by moment basis.

F. W. H. Myers in his poem Saint Paul has Paul saying,

"Let no man think that sudden in a minute
All is accomplished and the work is done ---
Though with thine earliest dawn thou shouldst begin it
Scarce were it ended in thy setting sun."

He is saying that a lifetime is too short to know all that God would have us to know to truly love Him, and to grow in Christ as we should. But this does not mean that we are to stop at the point where we can only see dimly, and we are like the blind man seeing, "Men like trees, walking." Instead, we must seek the complete healing so that we can "look up, be restored and see all men clearly."

This is what the touch of Jesus Christ is all about. It is not just a one moment thing or a one shot deal. But it is rather, coming to Him and seeking day by day to have Him live in us, and to have Him shine forth from our very lives. I invite you to invite Him into your heart anew this Lenten season and to strive to live as He would have you to live. ~~xxxxxx~~ If anyone is in doubt about any of this, I invite you to speak to me about it and I will be happy to help you in this.

ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
BUTLER, PENNSYLVANIA
SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT FEBRUARY 23, 1975
REV. RALPH C. LINK, PASTOR
MRS. MARILYN STEPHENSON, ORGANIST
MRS. CYNOLIE SYBERT, YOUTH CHOIR DIRECTOR
BRIAN KENNEDY, PAM FRY - ACOLYTES

ORDER OF WORSHIP 11:00 A.M.
PRELUDE MUSIC: "BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD" FROM "THE MESSIAH"
PRELUDE ON "ST. HILDA" RABLEY HANDEL
SILENT PRAYER
*PROCESSIONAL HYMN No. 184 "ALL HAIL THE POWER OF JESUS' NAME"
*ACSCRIPTION - CHORAL AMEN
*EXHORTATION
*CONFESSION (IN UNISON) "ETERNAL GOD, HOW OFTEN WE HAVE
PRAYED FOR THE COMING OF THY KINGDOM, YET WHEN IT HAS
BOUGHT TO COME THROUGH US WE HAVE SOMETIMES DARRIED THE
WAY; WE HAVE WANTED IT TO COME IN OTHERS, BUT NOT IN
OUR OWN HEARTS. WE FEEL IT IS WE WHO STAND BETWEEN MAN'S
NEED AND THEE; BETWEEN OURSELVES AND WHAT WE MIGHT BE;
AND WE HAVE NO TRUST IN OUR OWN STRENGTH, OR LOYALTY,
OR COURAGE. O GIVE US POWER TO LIVE THY WILL, AND SEEK
THY KINGDOM FIRST OF ALL. AMEN."
*KYRIE (CHOIR, CONGREGATION AND PASTOR)
*ASSURANCE OF PARDON - CHORAL AMEN
*PRAISE
*PASTOR: O LORD OPEN OUR LIPS.
*PEOPLE: AND OUR MOUTH SHALL SHOW FORTH THY PRAISE.
*DOXOLOGY No. 551 MATTHEW 11: 20-24 *MARY-B. ROLLS MT IN*
SCRIPTURE LESSON: MARK 8: 22-26 *JUST READ 3 A DAY.*
HYMN No. 8 "PRAISE YE THE LORD, THE ALMIGHTY"
*AFFIRMATION OF OUR FAITH (APOSTLES' CREED)
*GLORIA PATRI
*CALL TO PRAYER
*PASTOR: THE LORD BE WITH YOU.
*PEOPLE: AND WITH THY SPIRIT.
*PASTOR: LET US PRAY.
*PRAYER AND PRAYER RESPONSE
OFFERING
OFFERTORY: "CANTARILE" CONGREGATION
"HEM: "INTO THE WOODS MY MASTER WENT" RIDGEFIELD
YOUTH CHOIR

SERMON: "PIECE BY PIECE"
"BETHSAIDA"

PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER
*HYMN OF DEDICATION No. 467 "I LOVE TO TELL THE STORY"
*BENEDICTION AND THREE FOLD AMEN
POSTLUDE: "POSTLUDE IN G" READ
*CONGREGATION STANDING
THE LOVELY FLOWERS ON THE ALTAR HAVE BEEN PLACED BY
MRS. ALICE BEATTY AND MRS. WINIFRED WACHSMUTH IN
MEMORY OF "LOVED ONES".
SERVING AS USHERS TODAY ARE *DON KINGSBLEY, DANYL TAIT,
JOHN DREHER, GARY PENAR AND JOHN STEVENSON.
MRS. ANN WILLIAMS WILL REPRESENT COUNCIL AT THE DOOR
TODAY.

NURSERY IS PROVIDED TODAY BY: MRS. SHARON STAUFFER
AND MRS. JUDY SNYDER. *NO GAME HALL MATCH 2.8.85*
MONDAY - 6:30 - ST. PAUL'S VS. MERIDIAN IN BASKETBALL

TUESDAY - 7:00 - PROPERTY COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY - LENTEN SERVICE - "CAESARIA PHILIPPI"
THE ATTENDANCE LAST SUNDAY - 184; WED. 98.
GOOD FRIDAY BREAKFAST - YMCA - 6:00 A.M. - SEE
KENNETH WEITZEL OR J. W. HARMON FOR TICKETS - SPEAKER
WILL BE RICHARD K. KENNEDY, DD FROM PITTSBURGH.

ANY MEMBER OF THE CONGREGATION WHO WOULD LIKE TO TAKE
PART IN A WORSHIP SERVICE AT THE SUNNYVIEW HOME ON
MONDAY (TOMORROW), AT 1:15 P. M. IS INVITED. HE
NEED SOME PEOPLE TO HELP SING AND WE COULD USE A
PIANO PLAYER. *CHURCH MEET THURSDAY AT 1:00 P.M. IN ENTANCE*

NEXT SUNDAY - BAPTISM WILL BE HELD DURING THE 11 A.M.
SERVICE AND AT 4:00 P.M. THE SAME DAY. IF ANYONE
WOULD LIKE TO HAVE THEIR BAPTISM - CONTACT
THE PASTOR.

THE LILIES SHOULD BE ORDERED SHORTLY - BECAUSE OF
EASTER BEING SO EARLY THIS YEAR - A LOT OF THE LILIES
WILL NOT BE OPENED IN TIME. A GLIP OF PAPER WILL
BE SENT AROUND TODAY OR YOU CAN CONTACT BEA TAIT.
ALL LILIES (4 BUDS) WILL BE \$5.00 EACH.

A LOT OF PEOPLE HAVE ASKED IF THE "LIVING BIRLE" WOULD
BE ON A SPECIAL AGAIN - A SPECIAL EASTER BIRLE BONUS
IS AVAILABLE FOR \$8.25 - SEE BEA IF INTERESTED.
HOSPITALIZED: DOROTHY NICHOLAS, TREBA NICHOLAS.

MR. & MRS. STEVE VARGO HAVE A NEW BABY GIRL -
309 PLEASANTVIEW AVE. - CONGRATULATIONS BEA AND STEVE
WELCOME VISITORS:
LIT WOLAN DAO?

2/

"I see + I see -- 'Bethsaida!'"

Text: Mark 8:24, "And he looked up, and said, 'I see men like trees, walking.'"

Scripture: Matthew 11:20-24, Mark 8:22-26

Mk (rip. Js come Bethsaida again name mean "House of Fishers" / ON N. SHORE S. OF GAL. goodly portion fishermen Herod Philip or Philip Tetrarch rebuilt Beth 2 BC named Bethsaida - Julius honor Julia dotter Aug. Cae Js been here B4 as record Mt 11 "speak hily J Bap his minis these peop "upbraid peop unbelief "pass judgement on towns & Beth among them "speak more hily Tyre/Sidon this would rangle Beth/Chorazin/Capernaum Jew towns P & S Gentile Js condemn Beth & others accord Mt Jn Bap reject "efforts reject as well Mt say Js did mitey works there/little proof of this Indiff Beth peop prosperous/wealthy & no need relig had 2 preachs - reject both This set stage 4 heal blind man (read vs 23a) this show Js no perform mirac there this signif when realize ~~xx~~ % discip from there Philip, Andrew, later Yet, Js minis fail there/unwill perform minis there Bt, Js willing help indiv 1nce gain read saliva 4 healing/burn or cut put mouth Blindness common kid East many suffer OPTHALMIA, =inflammation eyeball ignorance hygiene/cleanliness = blindness Js & this incid desire Js love & compassion But also C something else/not 1 step healing take 2 step, & there those say Js no do smthing r But I Believe deliberately act this way Here 1 could still waves/heal long distance etc With such power why take 2 steps???? here man complete blind/not partial sum think Could C nothg Js touch eyes & we told, (TEXT) AND Then read Js touch eyes again, he see clearly 1 Believe signif this, it object lesson then & 2day when Js touch man he no see all at once Jy y suggest man seek complete cure & only half cure r-siful cond peop all walks never permit Js perform service complete renewal in them there so many only posses dim/clouded view of Him

Shirley & Ralph Charles Link, Nancy Link, Dale with Lianne his wife, Lloyd Link with Karen his wife
Jessica in front of Ralph C. Link
Ethan and Alisha in front of R. Dale and Lianne Link (the eldest son & family)









Ralph C. Link
153 Keck Road
Sarver, Pa. 16055
(412) 352-1103

Born: April 9, 1929, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Married: December 15, 1951
Wife: Shirley Margaret Neill
Born: December 8, 1930, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Children: Ralph Dale Link, born May 11, 1955, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Lloyd Alan Link, born May 28, 1958, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Nancy Lynn Link, born March 15, 1961, Butler, Pa.

SCHOOLING:

Graduated from Perry High School, Pittsburgh, Pa.
June 1947

Lay Ministry School, Penn West Conference of United
Church of Christ, September 1965 to May 1969

Commissioned Lay Minister June 1969

Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster, Pa.,
September 1970

Graduated from Lancaster Theological Seminary May 1974

Ordained to Christian Ministry March 10, 1974

PASTORATES:

As Lay Minister: short term, 1 month or less in
various churches 1965 to 1967

Emlenton Lamartine Charge of United Church of Christ
1967 to 1969

Short term in various churches 1970 until Seminary
entrance July 1970

July 1970 to December 1973 Student Pastor at Trinity
Charge, New Bloomfield, Duncannon, Pa., Penn Central
Conference, United Church of Christ

December 1973 to present, St. Paul's United Church of
Christ, Butler, Pa., Penn West Conference, United
Church of Christ

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

OF

Ralph C. Link

I am the youngest of five children. I was born just prior to the onset of the Depression. Our family was very poor. My father was an alcoholic and my mother was a very religious person who was searching for the Lord. During my childhood she did her best to teach me the things of the Lord. Later in life she came to a personal relationship with Him.

I grew up in the Evangelical and Reformed Church where salvation by grace alone was not preached nor taught. I knew all about Jesus, what He did, how He lived, His miracles, His death and resurrection, but I didn't know Him personally.

My life had many ups and downs and all the while I was attending church and striving with my good works to please God. At a very low point in my life when we were deeply in debt and my wife and three children were all ill, I came to the crossroads. I watched a Billy Graham Crusade on television from some distant city and the message he preached seemed to be directed right at me. I wrestled with making that commitment to Christ, but didn't. The next afternoon and evening at work on the 4 to 12 shift I came to the conclusion that I needed to make that commitment to Christ. It seemed like there was no other choice if life was to have any meaning. That night when I came home from work at 1:00 A.M., I laid face down on the living room floor and told God that I couldn't live my life in my own strength and I accepted the gift of salvation from my Savior Jesus Christ. My life has never been the same.

Through several meaningful circumstances I was called by God to serve Him in the Christian Ministry and to help spread that wonderful message of salvation through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. What a wonderful and rewarding time it has been and I give Him all the praise for my salvation and the opportunity to serve Him.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

OF

Ralph C. Link

I believe the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired inerrant Word of God. I believe the Bible is the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men and it is the final authority for the Christian faith and life.

I believe in one God, who is eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I believe in the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ that He is true God and true man. I believe that He was born of the Virgin Mary, that He lived in sinless life, that He performed the miracles recorded in Scripture, that He died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, that He bodily arose from the dead, that He ascended on high where He is at the right hand of Almighty God as our intercessor.

I believe in the Holy Spirit and that He comes and indwells each believer at the time of conversion. I believe that He lives in each believer to lead, to instruct, and to convict so that a believer may live a more godly life.

I believe that through the shed blood of Jesus Christ and through His resurrection, this is the only ground for justification and salvation for all who receive Him. A Lord and Savior and to such as receive Him, they are born of the Holy Spirit and become children of God.

I believe water baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of the Church but are not means of salvation.

I believe in the personal and premillennial and imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I believe in the resurrection of the dead, for the believer to resurrection of life and joy with the Lord, for the unbeliever to resurrection of judgement and everlasting punishment.